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## THE ROUND TABLE

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### "WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?"<sup>1</sup>

"What do you make of this?" Nothing, Mr. Editor. Nor can I perceive from the few words prefaced to his exhibit of questions and answers what the writer of the article expected to make of it. To me the tests seem futile. In another way they suggest that the author ought to be congratulated, for his class is delightfully healthy and normal.

If he is troubled by the results, hasn't he started on a wrong assumption? About the middle of June all through the Middle West *boys* from seventeen to eighteen years of age were graduated from sundry and divers high schools. They were *boys* in every sense of the word, just plain, hearty, wholesome boys. Then, lo and behold! About October 1, eighty-six of the number by chance, after a summer spent on the farm or in the store, on the tennis court or diamond, or in the swimming hole, enter a certain college and by some strange alchemy at once become *men*, "first-year men."

I shout with glee that my high-school boys do not know Masfield and Sudermann and Hauptmann and Amy Lowell, but do have as "favorite poets" Riley and Longfellow and Tennyson and Wordsworth. If the first are essentials, aren't you glad these *men* have escaped for at least six weeks? Why should boys whose favorite novelists are London, Wright, Dickens, Scott, and O. Henry, all voluminous writers with books in series (that delight of a reading boy), be expected to know the Greek dramatists, Chinese philosophers, Shakespearean characters outside the plays commonly found in a boy's field, French sculptors, and expatriated American painters?

And their "awareness"! Why not test it in their own field? Is it to be shown by knowledge of the somewhat obscure Cadorna? Even the United States government was not sufficiently aware of him and his needs to aid his country efficiently in time to avert disaster. Suvla Bay? Perhaps if the writer had been aware of the correct spelling, the boys might have shown their awareness more frequently. Bolsheviki? Who is aware of anything about these save their horrible,

<sup>1</sup> See *English Journal*, January, 1919.

changing, growing menace? Sibert? Why not any other brigadier-general among the host of officers of an army of 2,000,000 men?

Why should these boys, suddenly translated into *men*, be expected to be reading within the first six weeks after the operation anything but their lessons and their required books?

But now that the writer has made his test what is he going to do? Will he build on the favorite poets already loved and connect their immortal beauty and their lofty idealism more closely to the daily lives of my boys? If so, God bless him! Will he drag my American boys, who love Riley and Longfellow, through the materialism of Sudermann and Hauptmann? If so, God forbid! Now that these boy-men are approaching more nearly the time of active participation in business and the affairs of citizenship, will he use their liking for Dickens, Harold Bell Wright, and Scott, and the *Literary Digest* and *Saturday Evening Post* to strengthen their perception of and grasp of the high ethical principles so necessary for genuine success in the fields of business and citizenship? If so, God speed!

But let him look out, for the kind of investigation he has undertaken may very easily prove the equation "pep minus purpose equals piffle."

A HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHER

## THE EXAMINER'S CATECHISM

### B. PHILOSOPHY OF EXAMINING

Are there irreconcilable differences between examinations given as external tests to satisfy interested authority and examinations given as means of growth and development?

Is it consistent with modern educational philosophy to continue traditional systems of examinations, as commonly employed as a basis of promotions, in which pupils feel that they must pass set examinations at stated times or fail to maintain their places in the school?

What philosophical considerations seem to determine the purposes of examinations?

What are the most prominent motives that appeal to pupils who do their studying primarily with reference to final examinations?

What are some of the evil results of emphasis upon examinations as an incentive to study?

Within what limits is it true that under present systems of examining, teachers cannot get at the things most highly prized educationally—e.g., the effect of teaching upon the development of social attitudes or upon the establishment of specific habits?